



Latrobe Valley Naturalist

July-August 2015

Issue No. 579

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General meetings

Held at 7:30 pm on the
fourth Friday of each month
at the Newborough Uniting
Church, Old Sale Road
Newborough VIC 3825



A Blotched or Slender Hyacinth-orchid *Dipodium variegatum* photographed among Silvertop forest at Shipwreck Creek during the LV Field Nats Summer Camp (Photo: Ken Harris).

Upcoming events

July general meeting: Friday 24 July

Winter Members' Night

Excursion: Saturday 25 July – Sale Common. Meet 10am Lake Guthridge or carpool at Mexican Restaurant in Traralgon 9.15am.

Botany Group: Saturday 1 August – Morwell NP. Meet 10am at Kerry Rd carpark.

Bird Group: Tuesday 4 August – Uralla/Trafalgar Ponds. Meet 9.30am at Uralla Reserve.

Thursday 13 August – EA Wetland Survey. Meet 9.30am at Morwell River Bridge gate.

August general meeting: Friday 28 August

'Jean Galbraith: Writer in a Valley' – Meredith Fletcher

Excursion: Saturday 29 August – Jean Galbraith Reserve, then Wirilda Environment Park. Meet 10am in carpark near service station in Tyers.

Bird Group: Tuesday 1 September – Boolarra South. Meet 9.30 in Boolarra main street park.

Spring Camp: 4-7 September – Warby Ranges

Botany Group: Saturday 12 September – Mt Nicoll in the Hoddle Hills, near Fish Creek. Details TBA.

ANN 2014 GET-TOGETHER IN HOBART – Part 2

Monday 20th October

Field trip – The Styx Forest Reserve and Mt Field NP, led by Simon Grove and Keith and Sib Corbett

The Styx Forest Reserve lies to the south of Mt Field NP and the Gordon River Road. Falling just outside the huge Southwest NP, the area is under threat from timber harvesting. The reserve contains tall *E. regnans* trees, called Swamp Gum by Tasmanian folk – two highlighted specimens were of heights 83 m and 87 m.

Our circuit walk to the Russell Falls and Horseshoe Falls in Mt Field NP afforded a variety of orchids in flower, including Small Bird Orchid *Chiloglottis grammata* and Tall Greenhood *Pterostylis melagramma*.

Evening talk – Mike Driessen: ‘What’s special about Tassie’s fauna?’

Mike Driessen is the Senior Zoologist, Biodiversity Conservation Branch, Tasmanian Government. He began his excellent talk by explaining that Tasmania has been separated from mainland Australia for 8000 years, has links with other parts of Gondwana, an absence of koalas and can be thought of as an island of two halves, the high rainfall west and low rainfall east. The island has high levels of endemism among its abundant fauna. Thus there are five endemic mammal species, 15% of the state total. The 12 endemic bird species constitute 6% of the state list – these include the Black-headed Honeyeater and the Forty-spotted Pardalote. The program to conserve the Orange-bellied Parrot continues, with a release at Melaleuca in the far south-west currently underway. Tasmania is a stronghold of the Ground Parrot. Mike mentioned also that the Shy Albatross breeds only in Tasmania.

Thirty-three per cent of the state’s reptiles (seven in number, all skinks) are endemics; the Pedra Branca Skink is confined to a tiny rocky outcrop off the south-east corner. There are three Tasmanian endemic frogs, one being the Moss Frog, discovered as recently as 1992.

The island has a remarkable diversity of freshwater crayfish – 33 species, 91% of them endemic. These include the world’s largest, an *Astacopsis* species over 0.5 m in length and weighing up to 3.6 kg.

Evening talk – Dr Eric Woehler: ‘Status and conservation of beach-nesting birds in Tasmania’

Eric Woehler is the Convenor of Birdlife Tasmania and has been researching seabirds and shorebirds for more than 30 years. His sobering talk was based on a program of detailed GPS mapping of nests and breeding territories of resident shorebirds and colonies of Fairy and Little Terns, which was commenced in the late 1990s. Data collection now exceeds 430 days, the surveys being confined to the September to February breeding seasons. The overall picture is one of declines in both numbers and diversity of shorebird species. Dr Woehler focused on the Hooded Plover, endemic to Australia and one of the world’s rarest shorebirds, with the population now estimated at approx. 5,500 individuals. Numbers of the Red-capped Plover, also endemic to Australia, are decreasing on many beaches, with losses accelerating – this species is at a comparative disadvantage to the more aggressive Hooded Plover. The Australian Pied

Oystercatcher is now rare, with an estimated population of 11,000 individuals; the numbers are stable in some areas, possibly because it is long-lived.

Eric's key message was that our beaches must be managed for better protection as habitat. The pulling of coastal weeds such as Sea-spurge should be done in winter. Four-wheel drive vehicles on beaches are a major threat to habitat, and the increasing amount of marine debris is a problem. Sea-level rise may well cause further habitat loss.

Wednesday 22nd October

Field trip – Tasman Peninsula

This excursion focused on the Eaglehawk Neck area, taking in the well-known sea cave remnants Tasman Arch and Devils Kitchen and, later, Tessellated Pavement. The circuit walk linking the first two features accessed a diversity of plants in flower, such as *Bauera rubioides* and Spotted Sun-orchid *Thelymitra ixioides*, and also a Coral Fern of a different species to that found commonly in Victoria.

The Tessellated Pavement inter-tidal rock platform is siltstone that was cracked by stresses in the Earth's crust, perhaps between 160-60 MYA. The notable "tiled" appearance is the result of three distinct sets of fractures aligned to different directions. The tide level was ideal for rock-pooling with many anemones, sponges, starfish and crabs to be spotted.

Evening talk- Sarah Lloyd: 'Where the slime mould creeps: The fascinating world of myxomycetes'

This talk's title is in fact the title of a new book by Sarah Lloyd, the only publication in Australia devoted to acellular slime moulds (the class *Myxomycetes*). Sarah's home in north-western Tasmania has provided an excellent base for her research, with over 100 species having been found within a 1km radius. The book was launched during the evening, and may be ordered via the Fungimap website.

Thursday 23rd October

Evening talk – Lisa Cawthen: 'Unlocking the secret world of Tasmanian bats'

Opening her talk with a global perspective, Lisa explained that over 1000 bat species have been identified world-wide, spanning even the Arctic. Around 170 megabats comprise both frugivores and nectivores, while approximately 760 microbat species include insectivores, sanguivores and carnivores. New species are still being discovered, one recently in Cape York. Lisa pointed out that Australian population sizes are difficult to estimate, with our bats being tree rather than cave dwellers in the main. Many are critically endangered, and a Christmas Island species is Australia's most recent mammal extinction.

Turning to Tasmania, Lisa noted that eight bat species live in the state year-round, with occasional visitors, including some flying-foxes, reflecting the absence of a year-round food supply. The eight full-time residents include the tiny Little Forest Bat (one of the world's smallest), the Eastern Falsistrelle (one of the largest of the eight), the Chocolate Wattled Bat and Tasmania's most common species, Gould's Wattled Bat. The speaker concluded her talk by indicating that there are signs of a bat migration towards the Poles, perhaps as a result of climate change: for instance, the White-striped Freetail Bat recently found in Tasmania was

previously recorded on the mainland only.

2016 ANN Get-together

If my ramblings have tempted you to participate in the next ANN gathering, do keep in mind that the Western Australian Naturalists Club will host the 2016 get-together in the Perth region over the last week of August and first week of September. Not to be missed!

Philip Rayment

CLUB SUMMER CAMP 2015 – Part 1

This year's summer camp was held on 6-10 February at Mallacoota. The changes from the original planned destination of the Errinundra Plateau in January were prompted by a lack of suitable accommodation and the desire to avoid the school holidays. These decisions worked well with a large increase in participants – to 37 from the usual 20 or so. The choice of the leafy Shady Gully Caravan Park as our base for the three days of activities was also popular.

Saturday's excursions focused on the coastal environs around Mallacoota, including Shipwreck Creek in the afternoon, while on Sunday we explored the Genoa Peak and Falls area. A highlight on Monday was a ramble through the MLC Outdoor Campus 'Marshmead', facilitated by former ranger Bob Semmens who kindly joined us for all three days' outings. An evening boat trip on the Bottom Lake capped off a varied and enjoyable program.

The Narrows Trail - Saturday morning

Our first official morning of Camp Mallacoota saw us convoying out to Buckland's Boatshed carpark for our walk up the Narrows trail. Birdos were on the job early spotting Chestnut Teal, Wood Ducks and Black Ducks on the pool in the paddock above the carpark, and hearing Mistletoebirds in the big gum tree. The possible disadvantage of a noisy group was more than compensated for by all the pairs of sharp eyes and ears picking up a huge variety of life around us.

The path itself was a pleasure, cut through local rock, closely following the water's edge. A Pied Cormorant flew away as we went round the first corner, and Ken was pointing out lots of lovely flowering plants and rainforest creepers as we went under a cool moist tunnel of paperbarks. We crossed a little wooden bridge over a slowly drying series of mud pools and spotted a Sacred Kingfisher high above us. Then we heard an interesting bird and with the aid of some lovely whistled calls from a Field Nat, we had a Black-faced Monarch flitting about in curiosity and posing happily for lots of photos.



Black-faced Monarch along the Narrows Trail
(Photo: Ken Harris)

Our walk continued and reptiles, as well as birds, caught our attention: skinks, water monitors, magpies, Brown Thornbills, Grey Fantails, blue wrens, wattlebirds, bowerbirds... and someone saw a Satin Flycatcher too. The 37 people out had a wonderful morning. On the way back we drove past the inlet and jetty where there were Little Black Cormorants, Black Swans, Silver Gulls and pelicans. The Aboriginal middens were noted with an interesting comment "Middens are usually to be found in places with the best views"... no wonder we saw so many.

Madelon Lane

Shipwreck Creek – Saturday afternoon

Shipwreck creek is a well-frequented camping and daytime visitor spot, and for good reason: well sheltered with many spectacular walks and even more rewarding views.

When we arrived for lunch, we were entertained by a lace-monitor – scavenging for food scraps I imagined – not deterred by our presence and providing ample photo opportunities.

The parking/camping/day area was sheltered with mature trees, most notably *Corymbia gummifera* (Red Bloodwood) with its large urn-shaped fruits, *Eucalyptus sieberi* (Silvertop) and *Eucalyptus globoidea* (White Stringybark). According to Bob Semmens, this one is common along the coast, and I did find the very small fruits. I also found plenty of bigger fruits, presumably *Eucalyptus muelleriana* (Yellow Stringybark), and a bit further afield, *Angophora floribunda* (Rough-barked Angophora) with its leaves opposite and ribbed buds and fruit, and *Eucalyptus botryoides* (Southern Mahogany), having typically penniveined leaves with a yellow main vein. Also some spectacular 'Hyacinths' *Dipodium variegatum* (Slender Hyacinth-orchid) were flowering in the undergrowth of the Silvertops; someone called them Spotted Hyacinth-orchids. They were certainly spotted, but according to 'Orchids of East Gippsland' they should be Slender Hyacinth-orchids.



Fruits of Red Bloodwood (Photo: Ken Harris)

"Mind-boggling" is the term that will stay in my memory once we entered the heath vegetation, such was the variety. What was the dominant species? Hard to say! Maybe *Casuarina paludosa* (Scrub She-oak) or the profusely-flowering *Hakea teretifolia* (Dagger Hakea) or, on the track closer to the ground, *Astroloma humifusum* (Cranberry Heath). Over the few days I saw plenty of this Cranberry Heath, but it was flowering (summer now) and its leaves were greenish, narrow and beautifully ciliate. I always thought it to be winter/early spring flowering and more bluish-grey. Also present were *Epacris impressa* (Common Heath), *Kennedia rubicunda* (Dusky Coral Pea), *Acacia verticillata* (Prickly Moses), *Acacia myrtifolia* (Myrtle Wattle) and *Acacia oxycedrus* (Spike Wattle).

Bob mentioned four different species of *Xanthorrhoea* to be present. I do think he meant for the entire Croajingolong Park. We did see *Xanthorrhoea minor* (Small Grass-tree). Small?? Some flower stalks were more than 150 cm tall, though the bottom two-thirds bare and only the top one-third covered in flowers. It is just the other way around for the *Xanthorrhoea australis*

(Austral Grass-tree).

Another very curious plant Bob showed us was a Banksia – not flowering at the moment, very compact growing (1 - 2 m high) with lush green foliage, leaves broad-linear to ovate, a little like *B. marginata*; flowers or fruit-cones were not present (hybrid, infertile?) Bob said it had flowered with spectacular yellow flower-spikes. Study is currently being undertaken and it is thought to be a yet unnamed hybrid between *Banksia integrifolia* (Coast Banksia) and *Banksia spinulosa* (Hairpin Banksia). It certainly showed great ornamental potential.

Shortly after I was kissed by a Saw-sedge Butterfly... how lucky can you get? Well actually, it landed on my shoulder for a second and a half, three beautiful round 'eyes' on its wings. I hope some photos turn out well to do justice to this spectacular creature. The backdrop was a *Baeckia virgata* (Tall Baeckia), a compact round bush about 3 m high and nicely flowering at the time. The first trees away from the coast growing out of the heath vegetation were actually *Eucalyptus sieberi* (Silvertop), just to show how widespread this species actually is. In other locations, what a magnificent tree it can grow into!!

Me getting carried away a little? What about Ken? The ones present hopefully remember *Comesperma ericinum* (Heath Milkwort) and *Comesperma defoliatum* (Blue-spike Milkwort)? I do not remember well enough to make more meaningful comments.



Tall Lobelia (Photo: Ken Harris)

Lobelia often causes difficulties; in this case the general consensus was *Lobelia gibbosa* (Tall Lobelia) and *Lobelia anceps* (Angled Lobelia). Someone also mentioned Poison Lobelia *Lobelia concolor* to be present (listed as Poison Pratia in 'Flora of Melbourne' p232 - Is *Pratia* now included in the genus *Lobelia*?*) Another 'maybe' was *Epacris lanuginosa* (Woolly-style Heath). No flowers, but leaves upright and loosely up against the stem, and slightly twisted too.

The warm weather also brought out lots of lizards, providing good photo opportunities; one I remember was the Jacky Lizard.

With his long-term presence in the area, 'Bushy' Bob Semmens was able to show us so many plants, birds and other wildlife, with so many areas only accessible on foot, not necessarily via made tracks. After all, the area visited is part of the wilderness coast, Southern Biosphere Region.

Thanks to Phil too for putting together such an interesting program and to all in the party for sharing your sightings and knowledge.

Jack Weerts

*The Australian Plant Census lists *Lobelia* as the currently accepted name for *Pratia*

The evolving role of the NRM contractor

The guest speaker at our February general meeting was Alan Noy, director of the environmental services company Indigenous Design. Originally from the Latrobe Valley, Alan developed an interest in the environment when he moved to Warrandyte in the early 1980s and became involved with two local Friends groups, who improved his knowledge of indigenous flora and weed control.

In 1987, he commenced commercial operations, propagating plants and providing mine rehabilitation services to the State Electricity Commission (SEC) in the Latrobe Valley. At this stage, the objective was to control erosion and reduce fire risk, and the idea of 'biodiversity' was not widely accepted, so the standard species planted were Sweet Pittosporum, Cootamundra Wattle and Sallow Wattle.

From the late 1980s-mid 1990s, Alan's organisation grew in response to the increased outsourcing of work to contractors by privatised companies such as the SEC, as well as by Parks Victoria, DSE and local government. Natural resource management was enjoying a great deal of support, and there was high demand for specialised knowledge of native flora and fauna conservation. In the early 2000s, the federal government invested millions of dollars in the National Heritage Trust and Biodiversity Hotspots, after becoming signatory to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

However, in the mid-2000s, the environmental industry took a downturn as the Australian National Audit Office assessed the funded programs and found a lack of quantified monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes. By this time, natural resource management had become a mainstream industry, and large, opportunistic companies were competing with smaller ones like Indigenous Design, and in many cases, reducing the quality of the work that was undertaken. In the meantime, developers were lobbying the government to reduce 'green tape', and public support for climate change mitigation was waning.

Currently, government spending on conservation is being spread thinly across a multitude of projects. Requirements for development approvals have become more lenient, allowing quick environmental assessments to be conducted by companies with limited expertise in the field, thereby potentially weakening biodiversity protection. The 'Green Army' initiative is redistributing funds away from organisations such as Landcare, and providing direct competition to contractors. It is becoming increasingly important for organisations to account for their spending of limited environmental funding.

Many of Indigenous Design's clients, including Energy Australia, GDF Suez and Melbourne Water, use a system called the Global Reporting Initiative to assist them in contributing to sustainable development through the use of indicators such as protection or restoration of habitats, threatened species recording, and management of impacts on biodiversity. To assist the clients in meeting their reporting targets and spending funds efficiently, Indigenous Design has created a biodiversity register from which records of flora and fauna on their properties can be retrieved and compared with vegetation communities to improve vegetation management. The company has also developed a new cloud-based system called Cyber Tracker, which enables clients to log

in at any time to obtain up-to-date, detailed information on all works completed and results measured. Alan believes that embracing new technology is fundamental to improving efficiency, and that providing transparent reporting on costs and outcomes will ultimately assist in regaining political and private sector confidence in biodiversity investment.

Tamara Leitch

REPORT ON BUSINESS MEETING 22.06.2015

Finance

Cash Management Trading Account \$3,569.10, Term Deposit \$13,608.47

Business Arising, Correspondence & General Business

Botany microscope: Federation Uni's camera, which fits on a microscope eyepiece and sends an image to a computer, is to be trialled at the July meeting of the Botany Group.

LVFNC Spring Camp in Warby Ranges: 4-7 September; 29 on list (18 in cabins, 11 camping). Club needs to pay 1 night's accommodation for each cabin booked = \$60 from each of 18 people. Phil has a contact in Wangaratta who will provide suggestions for excursions.

SEANA Spring Camp 2016: Problem with dates as ANN camp in WA has chosen dates 24 Sept – 16 Oct for camp and pre/post tours, which overlaps our chosen dates of 14-17 Oct. Next meeting other options will be considered (early Sept or Nov) and photo competition will not be organised until dates are set.

Lions Club bird calendar: Alix showed a copy of the calendar in its final stages of production, and it looks excellent and has our logo prominently displayed. The Club will be given a number of copies, and we could also buy some at \$3.50 each; suggestion to get 200, which can be sold to members.

Data projector: There is a problem with projecting a decent image, so John Poppins will bring his projector each month until it is resolved. John Sunderland has suggested a large television screen as an alternative to a projector.

Walkie-talkie battery charger: A new charger has been bought.

Lichen brochure: Copies have been sent to National and State Libraries and registered on Thorpe Bowker website, which promotes it in the publications arena internationally.

A decision has been made for the Club to pay the Secretary \$50 each year to cover petty cash expenses that are hard to quantify and keep records of, such as mobile phone, internet and printing costs.

A suggestion has been made for all enquiries to the club to be sent to info@fieldnats.org, where they will be redirected to the appropriate recipient, instead of private email addresses being listed on the website.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The club welcomes Ian Onley from Gormandale, John Tulloch from Moe South and Melissa Thomson from Jeeralang Junction. We wish you all a long and happy association with us.

Winter Members' Night

Various speakers

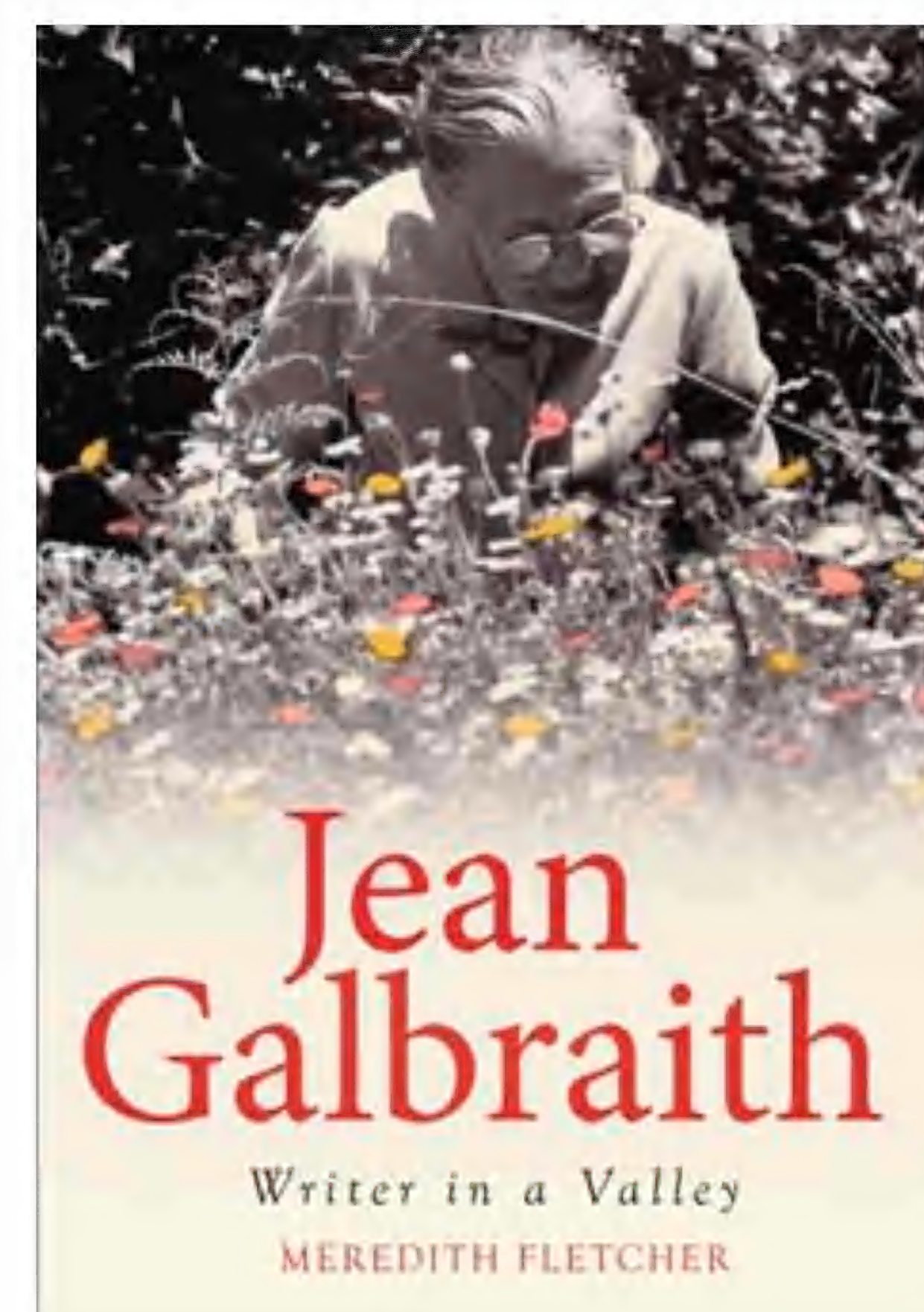
July's meeting is our annual Winter Members' Night, where club members have an opportunity to present a short talk (10-20 mins) on any topic of their choice related to natural history. A projector is available for showing Power Point presentations or photos, if required. If you would like to present a short talk to the group on this night, please register your interest by emailing info@fieldnats.org.



Guest speaker for August

Meredith Fletcher

Meredith Fletcher, who was director of the Centre for Gippsland Studies at Monash Gippsland for twenty years, has recently completed a biography of the Gippsland botanist and writer, Jean Galbraith. In her talk, she will provide an overview of Jean Galbraith's writing on Australian flora for a diverse readership including naturalists, gardeners and children.



Latrobe Valley Naturalist is the official publication of the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalist Club Inc. The Club subscription includes the "Naturalist".

Brief contributions and short articles on any aspect of natural history are invited from members of all clubs. Articles, including those covering Club speakers and excursions, would typically be around one A4 side in length, should not exceed 1,000 words, and may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Photos should be sent as an attachment and be a maximum of 1 megabyte in size.

Responsibility for the accuracy of information and opinions expressed in this magazine rests with the author of the article.

Contributions should be addressed to:

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